

MEMORANDUM

October 25, 2005

TO: Government Oversight Committee

FROM: Gordon O. Hendrickson, Ph.D.
Administrator, Public Trust Division
and State Archivist

SUBJECT: Follow-up Requests from September 19, 2005 Government Oversight Committee Meeting

Thank you for including the question of preservation and retention of government records on your agenda for the September 19, 2005 meeting of the Government Oversight Committee. I appreciate the attention you give to this important question. I am pleased I was able to contribute a few comments despite not being on the formal agenda.

During the meeting you raised several important questions regarding implementation of an effective and efficient records management program for Iowa. The State Archives and Records Program of the State Historical Society of Iowa's Public Trust Division is the agency of state government charged with developing and implementing the state's records management program and providing for the preservation and access to those sets of government records that must be retained in perpetuity. The state's archival and records management program is created in Chapter 305 *Code of Iowa* and the historical division of the Department of Cultural Affairs is assigned responsibility for managing that program in Section 303.2(d) *Code of Iowa*.

The State Records Commission established in Chapter 305 meets on a quarterly basis to review government information policies, standards and guidelines. At each meeting, the Commission reviews and acts upon requests from state agencies to create or modify records series retention and disposition schedules (hereafter records schedules). These records schedules are initiated by state agencies and reviewed by state archives and records program staff before being considered by the Commission. Each records schedule includes essential descriptive information about the records series to allow the agency, the state archives and records program staff and the Commission to appraise the administrative, legal, fiscal and historical value of the records series. When adopted by the Commission, records schedules become part of the interagency records manual. Each adopted schedule provides for the retention of agency records in the agency for an established period of time, followed by retention in a centralized records storage facility for a specific period of time, and then final disposition by destruction or retention in the state archives

in perpetuity. Only a very small portion of the records created by state agencies is retained permanently in the state archives.

The state archives and records program manages two records facilities: the State Records Center located at 920 Morgan Street, Suite M, in Des Moines (a leased facility) and the State Archives of Iowa located in the State Historical Building, 600 East Locust in Des Moines (a state owned facility).

The State Records Center serves as a central records storage facility for state agency records that will ultimately be destroyed. Currently the State Records Center contains approximately 60,000 cubic feet of records with a shelf capacity of 73,248 cubic feet. Records in the State Records Center will all, ultimately, be destroyed in accord with State Records Commission approved records series retention and disposition schedules. Some records are retained for as little as 18 months and others are retained for 100 years before being destroyed. How long records are retained is determined by evaluating the legal requirements for retention of records as well as the administrative, fiscal and historical values of those records. The agency and the state archives and records program jointly develop the retention period for all records and recommend a retention period to the State Records Commission for evaluation and adoption. All records in the State Records Center are in the legal custody of the state agencies and access to those records is maintained by the state agencies. Approximately 7,000 cubic feet of records are added to holdings of the State Records Center annually and a slightly smaller amount of records is destroyed each year. Records are destroyed only with final approval of state agencies to assure that records no litigation is pending involving those records. On average, four to five semi loads of records are recycled from the State Records Center every six months.

The State Archives of Iowa holds those records scheduled to be held in perpetuity. Records in the State Records Center are in the legal custody of the agency that created the records—public access to those records is available only through the agency that created the records. Records in the State Archives of Iowa are in the legal custody of the State Archives and are available for public access, in accord with confidentiality restrictions of Chapter 22 *Code of Iowa* or other statutory provisions. State agencies are required to identify applicable confidentiality restrictions at the time records are transferred to the State Archives of Iowa. Records in the State Archives of Iowa are available for public inspection during regular public hours of the reading room in the State Historical Building (currently 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Monday through Saturday). At present, the State Archives of Iowa contains approximately 30,000 cubic feet of records covering the time period of 1838 to the present. Records of all Iowa governors, for example, are included in these holdings along with legislative records, records of the Iowa Supreme Court, records of the Iowa Adjutant General (records of Iowa's participation in the Civil War and other military actions) and administrative records of nearly all state agencies.

Storage areas in the State Historical Building dedicated to the State Archives of Iowa are now filled to capacity, and then some. This is not surprising since the storage area was projected to be adequate for a ten year period of growth when the building was opened in 1987.

During your September 19, 2005 meeting you posed four specific questions concerning records retention. I shall respond to each.

1. What are the costs of storing and maintaining records?

In FY 2005, the budget for the state archives and records program of the Department of Cultural Affairs was \$259,421. Given the presence of about 90,000 cubic feet of records in the State Archives of Iowa and the State Records Center, the average operational cost for storage, retention and maintenance of all government records in the physical custody of the Department of Cultural Affairs is \$2.88 per cubic foot.

Beginning in FY 2006, the State Records Center has been relocated to a new leased facility of 26,710 square feet at 920 Morgan Street in Des Moines. Rent, operating expenses and taxes for lease of the State Records Center for FY 2006 are estimated to be \$6.55 per square foot annually. Actual operating expenses and taxes may vary from the estimate. Assuming the rent, operating expense and taxes estimates to be accurate and using a total capacity of capacity of 77,748 cubic feet for storage of records in the new facility, the result is a per cubic foot cost of \$2.25 annually.

Estimates of the cost to store and maintain records in a business office range from \$10.00 to \$25.00 per linear inch. (Robek, Brown and Stephens. *Information and Records Management: Document Based Information Systems*, New York, 1995, p. 9). Using the conservative, 10 year old estimate of \$10 per inch (\$120 per foot), storage in the State Records Center and the State Archives of Iowa reduces storage costs dramatically over continued storage in state agency offices.

Using budget figures for the 2004 fiscal year, the Council of State Archivists has ranked Iowa's investment in its archives and records program at 44th in the nation based on the number of dollars dedicated to the state archives and records program as a percentage of the total state budget. When comparing the number of employees dedicated to the state archives and records program relative to the number of total state employees, Iowa ranks 45th in the nation for its support of its archives and records management program.

2. For outside requests, what are the costs of providing records from storage including the number of staff, time spend fulfilling requests, etc.

The staff of the State Records Center provide access to records only to state agencies, they do not provide public access to records in the legal custody of the state agencies. In FY 2005 staff provided 22,552 records actions for state agencies (retrieval, re-files, destruction) and provided

an additional 24,072 records searches concerning Department of Human Services ADC/FIP payouts. Three records clerks provide this service at a total staff cost, including salary and fringe benefits of \$118,800. The average cost per records action or search is, therefore, about \$1.70 per request after accounting for the time these clerks devote to other than retrieval processes.

In addition to time spent on records search, retrieval and re-filing, these clerks devote about 1/3 of their time to maintaining the inventory at the State Records Center, transporting records from state agency offices to the State Records Center for storage, and destroying records in accord with established records series retention and disposition schedules.

The State Archives of Iowa provides public access to records in the custody of the State Archives through the State Historical Society's reading room in Des Moines. In FY 2005, 1,535 users visited the State Historical Society's reading room specifically to use government records and private manuscripts. Those users requested more than 1000 boxes of records for use in the reading room for research projects ranging from civil war studies to family history research, to legal research. Media representatives also visited to use government records. Most researchers who utilize state government records require intensive assistance from archivists to identify the records needed to complete the research project at hand. Unlike state agency users, most public users of archival records do not know which records are needed for a particular research project when they start their research. They need professional assistance to identify the records needed so they can then be retrieved and used for research. More than 2300 copies were produced for these patrons. State agencies retrieved 1,035 boxes of records for review in agency offices during the fiscal year. We have one archivist who spends approximately 40% of time on providing reference services. That amounts to an annual expenditure of \$28,900 for salaries and benefits on reference services in the State Archives of Iowa.

3. Have any diseases been found in stored documents?

To the best of my knowledge no diseases have been found. Active or inactive mold spores are found in some records and some individuals may have an allergic reaction to the mold spores or to dust present in some stored records.

4. Have you surveyed other states regarding methods used for storage of records, length of time records are stored, legal requirements regarding retention of records? If not, the Committee requests that this be done and information reported back to the Committee.

As State Archivist, I am an active member of several professional organizations including the Council of State Archivists (formerly the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators), the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and the Society of American Archivists. In that capacity I am in regular communication with records professionals throughout the United States concerning methods and strategies for efficient records storage and maintenance.

The Council of State Archivists (CoSA) regularly reviews the status of records keeping in the United States and evaluates the condition of records programs in the states and territories. CoSA maintains a valuable web site (www.COSHRC.org) with links to research reports, records resources, and every state archival and records management program in the nation. These links include access to all records retention information that is available on-line. In the course of establishing or modifying records series retention and disposition schedules, staff of the state archives and records program regularly consult colleagues and resources in other states and in the National Archives and Records Administration, either directly or through on-line resources, to evaluate how particular records series are administered in other states.

4. Suggestions to the Government Oversight Committee regarding suggested changes in the law on record retention, including length of time, methods for storage, public access to archives records, etc.

The legislative adoption of the rewritten “State Archives and Records Act,” Chapter 305 *Code of Iowa* in 2003 established a efficient methodology for the regular review of retention periods for all records of state government. The implementation of an enterprise-wide records management software application this fall will facilitate agency interaction with the state records management program and will expedite review of requests to change records series retention and disposition schedules.

The only amendment to propose would be to define the term “preservation duplicate” as used in chapter 305.12 *Code of Iowa*.